

(2) The construction of a new replacement dwelling.

(3) The provision of a direct loan which requires regular amortization or deferred repayment. Terms of such loan will be at the discretion of the Postal Service.

(4) A replacement housing payment in excess of the \$5,250 and \$22,500 limitations contained in § 777.24. A rental subsidy under this section may be provided in installments.

(5) The relocation and any needed rehabilitation of a replacement dwelling.

(6) The purchase or lease of land and/or a replacement dwelling by the Postal Service and subsequent sale or lease to, or exchange with, a displaced person.

(7) The removal of barriers to the handicapped.

(8) Any other method determined by the Postal Service to be reasonable.

(d) *Proof of Financial Need.* Last Resort Housing benefits exceeding the limitations under § 777.24(b)(2) and § 777.24(e)(2) will not be paid unless required to provide housing within the displaced person's financial means. To establish financial means, the displaced person must furnish the Postal Service proof of gross monthly income through income tax returns, certified financial statements or other reasonable evidence which the Postal Service determines is satisfactory.

[51 FR 6983, Feb. 27, 1986, as amended at 52 FR 48029, Dec. 17, 1987]

#### § 777.28 Claims and appeals.

(a) *Preparation of Claim.* The relocation representative should assist eligible displaced persons in the preparation of claims for moving assistance and relocation housing assistance. Preliminary review should be conducted in the field by the relocation representative with the displaced person, to preclude technical difficulties in processing the claim at a higher level.

(b) *Documentation.* Any claim for a relocation payment must be supported by such documentation as may be required to support the claim, for example the length of occupancy at the displacement dwelling, the rent paid at the displacement dwelling, expenses incurred in relocating, etc. A displaced person must be provided reasonable as-

sistance to complete and file any required claim.

(c) *Time for Filing.* All claims must be filed with the Postal Service within 18 months after the date of the actual move from the displacement property.

(d) *Review, Approval and Payment.* The Postal Service will review claims within 60 days of submission and approve or disapprove payment. Upon approval or partial approval of the displaced person's claim, the Postal Service will promptly authorize payment of the approved amount. The certification that the claimant has occupied decent, safe, and sanitary housing must be completed prior to final payment of replacement housing payments.

(e) *Relocation Payments Not Considered as Income.* Upon approval of the claim and delivery of the relocation payment, the displaced person must be advised that no relocation payment made under these procedures shall be considered as income for the purpose of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, or for the purpose of determining the eligibility or the extent of eligibility of any person for assistance under the Social Security Act or any other Federal Law.

(f) *Certification.* Certification that a person is displaced will be provided any agency requiring such information to assist that person under any Federal law or program.

(g) *Advance of Funds.* If the displaced person cannot arrange for the acquisition of a replacement property because of financial problems and the problems would be solved by an advance of funds, the Postal Service may determine the estimated amount of the actual claim and authorize an advance of that amount or a portion thereof. The displaced person will be fully informed in writing that his or her final claim will then be subject to adjustment. Advance payments should not be made to persons with a history of financial irresponsibility.

(h) *Money Owed to the Postal Service.* In cases of Postal Service leasing the acquired property to a displaced person, or in cases of advance moving cost payments, any monies due the Postal Service by the displaced person and not paid before the remainder of the relocation payments are made

must be deducted from such payments and the relocation file so documented.

(i) *Notice of Denial of Claim.* If the Postal Service disapproves all or part of a payment claimed, or refuses to consider the claim on its merits because of untimely filing or other grounds, it must promptly notify the claimant in writing of the determination, the basis for the determination, and the procedures for appealing the determination.

(j) *Appeal Procedure.* If a displaced person wishes to file an appeal:

(1) The appeal must be in writing.

(2) The appeal must be directed to the General Manager, Real Estate Division, and must set forth the displaced person's reasons for the appeal. (The General Manager shall not have taken part in the decision which led to the appeal. Appeals misdirected to others must be forwarded immediately to the General Manager with notification of the forwarding to the appellant.)

(3) The appeal must be submitted within 60 days after the displaced person receives written notification of the Postal Service's original determination concerning the displacee's claim. The Postal Service may extend this time limit for good cause.

(k) *Right of Representation.* A displaced person has a right to be represented by legal counsel or other representative in connection with his or her appeal, but solely at the person's own expense.

(l) *Review of Files by Appellant.* The Postal Service must permit a person to inspect and copy all materials pertinent to his or her appeal, except materials which are confidential. Such inspection will be permitted as allowed under the Freedom of Information Act, 39 CFR Part 265.

(m) *Scope of Review.* In deciding an appeal, the Postal Service must consider all pertinent justification and other material submitted by the displaced person and all other available information that is needed to ensure a fair and full review of the appeal.

(n) *Determination and Notification After Appeal.* Promptly after receipt of all supporting information submitted by the appellant, the General Manager, Real Estate Division, must make a written determination on the appeal,

including the basis on which the decision was made, and furnish the appellant a copy. If the full relief requested is not granted at the Service Center level, the General Manager, Real Estate Division, must advise the person of his or her right to appeal the decision to the Director, Office of Real Estate. The rules stated here for appeals to the General Manager apply as well as to appeals to the Director, Office of Real Estate.

[51 FR 6983, Feb. 27, 1986, as amended at 54 FR 10668, Mar. 15, 1989]

### Subpart C—Acquisition

#### § 777.31 Acquisition procedures.

(a) *Policy; Application of Section.* The Postal Service, as a matter of policy, acquires interests in real property through voluntary agreements with owners. Only under unusual and compelling circumstances, and on a case-by-case basis, does the Postal Service acquire real property through the exercise or the threat of the exercise of eminent domain. This policy does not, however, prevent the Postal Service from occasionally entering into mutually agreeable condemnation proceedings with an owner, where price is not an issue, and for such purposes as to clear title or to acquire property from certain elected officials. For the purposes of this section, the Postal Service does not consider such voluntary and mutually agreeable uses of condemnation proceedings as the exercise or the threat of the exercise of eminent domain. The following regulations apply only to acquisitions by the exercise or the threat of the exercise of eminent domain:

(1) *Notice to Owner.* As soon as feasible after deciding to acquire a specific property through the exercise of eminent domain, the Postal Service must notify the owner of its intent to acquire the property.

(2) *Expeditious Negotiations.* The Postal Service must make every reasonable effort to acquire real property expeditiously by negotiation.

(3) *Appraisal and Invitation to Owner.* Before the initiation of negotiations, the real property shall be appraised in accordance with Postal Service appraisal standards as outlined in RE-1